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**Media Release**  
August 31, 2011

### **Biden Renews Call on Web Site to Remove Adult Services Ads**

**Wilmington** – Attorney General Beau Biden today renewed his call on Backpage.com, an online advertising Web site, to eliminate its section of adult-themed classified ads that have been found to solicit child prostitution. In a letter (see attached) sent jointly with 45 other Attorneys General, Biden also called on the site to verify and document specific steps it is taking to prevent illegal activity on its site.

“Backpage.com is simply not doing the right thing by continuing to profit from ads that exploit women and children,” Biden said. “The only way for them to stop this illegal activity and protect kids is to remove its adult services ads and take aggressive action to ensure that these posts don’t appear elsewhere on its site.”

In September, 2010, Biden and 20 Attorneys General wrote Backpage.com requesting that its adult services section be closed. Backpage.com claims it has strict policies to prevent illegal postings. However, Attorneys General have found hundreds of ads on Backpage.com’s regional sites that are clearly for illegal services. Moreover, they point to more than 50 cases in 22 states over three years that involve the trafficking or attempted trafficking of children through Backpage.com.

Attorney General Biden was among Attorneys General who successfully persuaded the online advertising site Craigslist.org to remove its adult classifieds because the postings were being used to solicit child prostitution and other forms of human trafficking. In 2008, Attorneys General in reached an agreement with Craigslist to crack down on illegal listings in an effort to reduce crimes like human trafficking. Craigslist ultimately removed its “erotic services” section altogether in May, 2009.

Backpage.com is owned by Village Voice Media, LLC, which owns 13 weekly newspapers in the United States and is the top provider of “adult services” advertisements. Industry analysts estimate that Village Voice generates more than \$22 million in annual revenue from these ads.

In today’s letter the Attorneys General ask the company to substantiate the claim that it enforces policies to prevent illegal activity. Specifically, the attorneys general ask Backpage.com to provide those policies and to describe in detail its understanding of what constitutes “illegal activity” and whether advertisements for prostitution fall into that category. The Attorneys General also seek how many adult services advertisements have been submitted to the site over the past year, how many

were individually screened, how many were rejected prior to publication and how many were removed after being discovered to be for illegal services.

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